



AETC News Clips

Altus AFB, Okla.



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Air park studied at base

By MITCH MEADOR

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ALTUS — Now that Altus Air Force Base has survived the 2005 round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the community is ready to SOAR.

SOAR is the acronym for Southwest Oklahoma Aviation Renaissance Air Park, a proposed air industrial park that would be located on 154 acres of city-owned land immediately north of Altus Air Force Base.

The May 13 announcement by the Department of Defense that Altus AFB will remain open prompted Altus Mayor T.L. Gramling to initiate a request through Altus AFB for the joint use of flying facilities on the base.

In just six months, that request had proceeded smoothly through Altus AFB officials, 19th Air Force officials, Headquarters Air Education and Training Command, and Air Force officials in the Pentagon, according to retired Air Force Col. Geno Redmon, director of military and economic development for the City of Altus.

On Nov. 4, Altus was approved by Fred Kuhn, deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations, to conduct research into the joint use of Altus AFB by civilians.

Redmon said it has taken three to five years to get similar concepts going elsewhere, such as the partnership between Scott AFB and Mid-America Air Park in Illinois, but the Altus project is moving with amazing speed.

In fact, he envisions breaking ground on the air park in the summer of 2006. The launch customer might even occupy the first parcel of land on site in another 12 to 14 months after that.

Meanwhile, the City of Altus has been awarded a \$200,000 grant from the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission to carry out the next steps in the process — hire a private firm to do an Air Force environmental impact analysis, do the research approved by Kuhn and start initial infrastructure develop-

ment for joint civil and military aircraft operations that may be compatible with the Air Force mission at the base.

The Altus Economic Development Corporation, which initiated the project, envisions the air park as at least a \$20 million project that would convert the 154-acre property to taxiway, aircraft parking and hangars for commercial work on civilian aircraft.

To work, the concept will rely heavily on a very valuable piece of real estate next door.

"The Altus AFB runways are very long, and they're capable of handling virtually any aircraft that's flying in the world today. We hope to use those runways for landing and takeoff of large commercial-type airframes such as Boeing 767's, Boeing 747's, Airbus 330's and future Airbus 380's," Redmon said.

"We hope that by developing the air park we have clients who are interested in using hangars in the air park to do aircraft conversions (from passenger to VIP configurations), periodic maintenance on large civilian aircraft and large aircraft painting to include contract work on large military aircraft," he added.

And yes, the City of Altus has been approached by private companies that would be interested in using such an air park.



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➤ The site is unimproved agricultural land at this point. It was bought by the City of Altus some years ago with future planning in mind.

Once the air park is up and running, civilians would be using portions of the runway of Altus AFB to bring in large aircraft, strictly on a non-interference basis with aircraft operations at Altus AFB. Redmon said the air park will be designed so that it has access to the Altus AFB runways, but the base will be totally secure. The Air Force will have control of a moveable access gate, and no aircraft will ever enter the Altus AFB area without specific approval of the Air Force.

➤ The City of Altus will support the infrastructure of the air park, Redmon noted. He said the launch customer would require approximately \$20 million in private funding (venture capital) to pay for the ramp, parking space and a large commercial hangar.

Operations of the Altus/Quartz Mountain Regional Airport, approximately five miles west of Altus AFB, will not be affected by the development of the new industrial air park, Redmon said. The municipal airport is capable of handling regional turboprop operations such as Beechcraft King Air and small commercial business jets — Lear jets or the Cessna Citation.

“The upshot of it is, from an economic development standpoint, the City of Altus hopes to capitalize on the base's very long runways capable of accommodating any of the world's aircraft. It's a grand vision.

SOARING to new heights

■ SOAR is the acronym for Southwest Oklahoma Aviation Renaissance Air Park, a proposed industrial park that would be located on 154 acres of city-owned land immediately north of Altus Air Force Base.

■ The City of Altus has been awarded a \$200,000 grant from the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission to carry out the next steps in the process.

■ The Altus Economic Development Corporation envisions the air park as at least a \$20 million project that would convert the property to taxiway, aircraft parking and hangars for commercial work on civilian aircraft which would be able to use the air base's runways for landing and takeoff of large commercial aircraft.

In order for the city to soar, so do the air park have to soar,” Redmon said.



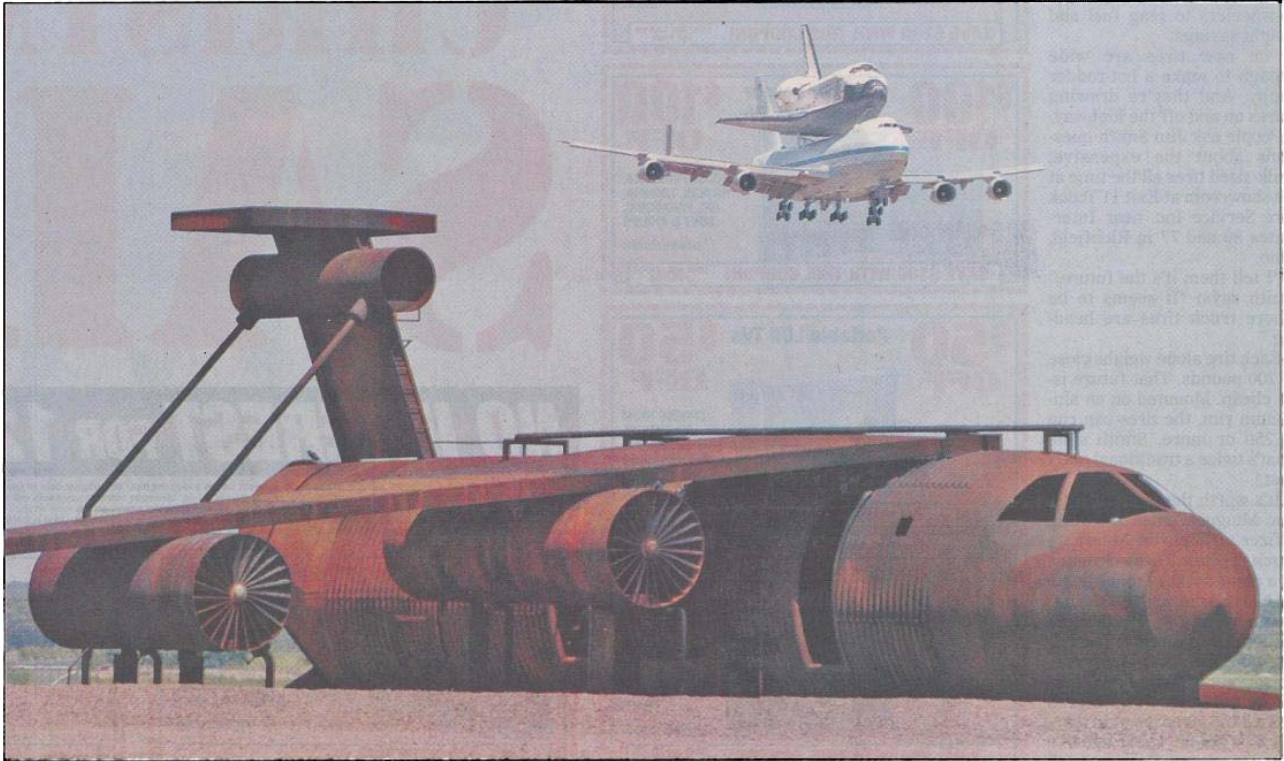
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Ready to SOAR



MICHAEL D. POPP/STAFF

Altus Air Force Base has had many distinguished visitors, such as the space shuttle Discovery that arrived in August, but city leaders are hoping that development of an air park adjacent to the base could mean more jobs for the community.

The Lawton Constitution

PAGE: B1

DATE: 25 Dec 05



AETC News Clips

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ASYMCA, First Sergeants play Santa

by Airman 1st Class Aldric Borders, Patriot assistant editor with reports from ASYMCA

With help from the Armed Services YMCA, Woman's Day Magazine, Mattel, Wal-Mart and the local community, the first sergeants of Altus Air Force Base were able to bring a little more holiday cheer to Altus' deployed airmen and their families with surprise deliveries of holiday gifts.

Altus first shirts delivered over 500 gifts to airmen and their family members this past week and more than 200 packages were sent out to deployed Airmen as well.

"More than half of the cash donations came from the ASYMCA," said Joan Wilcoxon, Altus branch ASYMCA director.

"Serving those who serve America is the ASYMCA's slogan," Wilcoxon said.

"The ASYMCA was able to donate what we did due to a grant we received from Women's Day Magazine.

"Last year Women's Day Magazine ran an article about deployed troops and their families

and asked readers around the country to donate so we, the ASYMCA, could use the donations to support our troops."

The donations went toward toys and gifts for more than 80 deployed members and their families, said Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Narofsky, 97th Air Mobility Wing command chief.

"It also went toward stocking stuffers and surprises for our junior ranking Airmen still here at Altus," he said.

"Many of the toys donated came from Mattel, who donates to the ASYMCA every year," Wilcoxon said.

"While we were shopping for our troops at the local Wal-Mart, the upper management realized what we were doing and donated two bicycles to further help us support our Altus warriors," said Chief Narofsky.

"The donations from the local community and around the country also made it possible for us (ASYMCA) to send gift cards abroad to our deployed airmen. We need to remember that they are Altus warriors even when they are gone and make sure they have what they need over there," said Wilcoxon.



AETC News Clips

Keesler AFB, Miss.



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Military bill has money for rebuilding

By Michael Newsom

The big military news last week was the funding doled out by the federal government to help South Mississippi rebuild.

Word came down from Washington on Wednesday night that a \$29 billion bill was signed that appropriated more than \$1.3 billion for local military installations for construction and family housing.

The bill has money for Keesler Air Force Base, along with the Armed Forces Retirement Home, the Air National Guard's Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport and the Naval Construction Battalion Center, among others.

Air Force - Keesler Medical Center had an estimated \$80 million in damage. It will receive nearly \$45 million in federal funding for the repairs.

In Landstuhl, Germany, Keesler personnel filled in for medics who left the hospital for Pakistan, to help in the wake of the country's deadly earthquake.

The 58 doctors, nurses and medics had been serving a 120-day stint at the German hospital. They deployed following Hurricane Katrina, according to a news release.

"Keesler Medical Center took a big hit," said Air Force Lt. Col. Frank Glenn, commander of the Keesler contingent. "For most of us who are here, we wouldn't have had a job probably until about October 2006. That was one of the reasons that we were sent here. We have some surgeons with us that need to be cutting to keep their skills up."

At Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., NORAD tracked Santa Claus' flight for the 50th time.

National Guard - More members of the 155th Brigade Combat Team landed in Gulfport last week on three flights as a part of the gradual return home.

Guard officials said they expect the entire 4,000-member group to return by mid-January.

The federal bill also gave \$32.1 million for the Air National Guard, which will help rebuild Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport.

Navy - The Navy was awarded \$277.2 million to help rebuild Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport and Navy interests at Stennis Space Center in the \$29 billion aid package.

Military Notebook

PAGE:

DATE: 26 Dec 05



AETC News Clips

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Veterans, deployed military appreciate holiday even more ***Families make do with phone calls, e-mail***

By Michael Newsom

The holiday spirit for deployed military personnel will beam through telephone lines from South Mississippi across the globe today, but those who recently returned from Iraq will be thinking of those who didn't make it back.

Sgt. Dennis Woullard, a Marine reservist with the 4th Amphibious Assault Battalion based in Gulfport, returned from Iraq in mid-October.

Speaking by phone from San Dimas, Calif., where he is spending time with friends and family, he said this year, Christmas is much different.

"Every day, the sunshine is just a little bit brighter," Woullard said with a wistful tone. "I just know there are no obstacles I face now that I couldn't get through. I look back at my comrades that didn't make it and I often wonder how they would celebrate this Christmas."

Woullard knows he's lucky he made it home. In a two-day span in August, 20 Marines were killed near Haditha, Iraq. Two were in Woullard's platoon.

"I think about the families who are missing a loved one, a father, a son, a brother and I am grateful to be here and glad there isn't a missing spot at the dinner table for me." Woullard said his wife and kids evacuated Hurricane Katrina and went to Chicago, where they will remain until after Christmas. But he said when the kids return around New Year's day, they will get the rest of their presents.

"Some of the bigger toys like bikes I am going to wait until they get back to the Coast," he said. "It is shaping up to be a really good Christmas. They are glad I am stateside."

Woullard awaits the return of his brother, Sgt. Jimmy Woullard, an Army veteran of Afghanistan who is back at Fort Bliss, Texas. Woullard said he expects his brother, who has been home about a year, to be in Gulfport for Christmas.

"We will have a lot to talk about, a lot of war stories," Dennis Woullard said. "I don't know if he wants to talk about it, but we'll see."

The soldiers who are deployed have their resourcefulness tested at Christmas.

Logistics can be a problem for gift-giving, but the Internet is making it easier for Lt. Michael Meno, a Seabee deployed to Guam with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133.

"You just do it on the Internet," Meno said by phone. "Fortunately, the Internet is an option, because we would have had to think about what we wanted to buy the day we left, if it wasn't."

This is his first Christmas deployment in eight years of service. He will return in April. Meno said his wife Pauline has sent gifts and asks every day if they have arrived.

Pauline Meno said the couple's children Noah, 7, and Paige, 5, understand why Dad is away.

Military Notebook

PAGE:

DATE: 25 Dec 05



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"They are able to talk to him," Meno said. "For them, they are younger. They understand he is gone. They understand I am home. They send Christmas presents. As long as they have one person at home, they are fine."

While the Meno family celebrate Christmas in Orange Grove, Lt. Meno will be in Guam, where he said the temperature is in the mid-70s and Christmas bacchanalia is in full swing. There are Christmas lights and Santa Clauses in the resort towns that surround the base.

He said the cooks in the galley have a traditional meal planned for the 140 Seabees at the base.

"We'll just have the meal and spend some time with the troops and just relax and reflect on the holidays," he said "It is kind of like a nice break with a meal. We'll sit down with the folks that got packages." Meno says he will call home for Christmas at a strange time because Guam is 16 hours behind U.S. Central Time.

The soldiers of the 1108th AVCRAD are far ahead of U.S. time, deployed to Kuwait in support of U.S. operations in the region. They maintain military equipment for their 115-member Army National Guard aviation repair group. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jamie White, and Sgt. 1st Class Cliff Long, both of Gulfport, are making due on the edges of a war zone.

"I have a small Christmas tree here in my barracks, and my presents are sitting under the tree," White said. "On Christmas morning, I will open my presents, then see what my fellow soldiers received for Christmas."

Long will have a working holiday at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"I will probably be spending Christmas at the SPOD (shipping Port of Delivery) preparing U.S. Army helicopters for shipment to stateside posts," he wrote in an e-mail. "The guys in my platoon will most likely be with me."

The two said they will call their children on Christmas Day.

Air Force Master Sgt. Tommy Belcher of Ocean Springs will have a leisurely German Christmas. Belcher is in Landstuhl Medical Regional Center, Germany, with Keesler's 81st Expeditionary Medical Support. He will dine at an Italian-style buffet at the enlisted club at Ramstein Air Base. After the meal, he plans to take it easy.

"I'll be watching the Lakers and Miami Heat game (and cheering for Miami)," Belcher said. "Normally I'd watch the game with my son."

Military Notebook

PAGE:

DATE: 25 Dec 05



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MREs donated, received Coastians with more give to those with less

By Jean Prescott

One Sound Off caller's offer of MREs precipitated a call-and-response reaction that not only went on for days but gathered Christmas decorations along the way.

The upshot is that many folks have donated, and many have been beneficiaries of those donations.

"I'm all over the place," USAF Sgt. Julie Sargent said last week. "We've given out more than 220 cases of MREs to people from Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, Waveland, DeLisle. Same thing with decorations, and we pick up more every day," so both commodities are in ample supply.

Sargent, who grew up in Ocean Springs and got back here right before Katrina, said, "It swells my heart to see so many people being so generous... and the humor and spirit of the people who've lost everything."

Sargent's sentiments are echoed by Jennifer Morano, a member of the waitstaff at Two Sisters Garden Cafe in Ocean Springs. Almost since it reopened after Hurricane Katrina, it has been a depository for holiday decorations.

"How many?" Morano said. "Well, we have a back patio where customers eat outdoors. We got so much stuff that for a while we couldn't serve people back there. It was that full."

She said she was touched by the fact that most of the donors were "older men and ladies" who brought decorations, trees, lights, garlands and even holiday knickknacks, "All really good stuff, though some of it looked like it was from the '60s." Much of the cache collected by Morano and Two Sisters owners Muriel

Gatlin and Pat Brady has been distributed.

Make inquiries about MREs to Sargent at 282-3799.



AETC News Clips

Lackland AFB, Texas



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General serves up feast at Lackland

Web Posted: 12/26/2005 12:00 AM CST

Michelle Koidin Jaffee
Express-News Staff Writer

The troops did not serve the general Sunday at Lackland AFB. The general served the troops.

Giant silver spoon in hand, Brig. Gen. Mary Kaye Hertog dished out Christmas Day trimmings of mashed potatoes, peas and corn to Air Force folks from trainees to retirees.

Her efforts, a tradition for generals at Lackland, promotes unity among the ranks, said retired Tech Sgt. Wayne Aldaco.

"It gives you a feeling that you're important," said Aldaco, dining with his wife and son in a chow hall decorated with Christmas lights and stockings. "It doesn't make you feel so separated."

As they enjoyed the special treatment, the day was routine for military members spending the holidays in Iraq.

Senior Airman Heather Ross of San Antonio, deployed to the U.S. military hospital in Balad, told the Associated Press that her 18-month-old daughter was spending a second Christmas without her.

"It's not even a holiday here," Ross said. "It doesn't feel like Christmas."

But back in San Antonio, the mood was festive as families stood in the cafeteria line to be served by Gen. Hertog, Command Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Isakson and their spouses.

Following their own tradition was the King family. With members of the family now stationed at Air Force bases from California to Florida, four generations of the clan came together in the Bluebonnet Inn dining hall.

"It's home for us," said Connie King, whose husband, Capt. Chris King, worked security police at Lackland before being transferred to Vandenberg AFB in California.

Capt. King liked seeing Hertog, commander of the 37th Training Wing, serve the troops.



(Kevin Geil/Express-News)

Brig. Gen. Mary Kaye Hertog and her husband, retired Chief Master Sgt. Herm Hertog, laugh as they serve Christmas dinner at Lackland AFB.



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Lackland AFB, Texas



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"What she's doing is servant-leadership," King said. Leaders should take "every opportunity you get to show your appreciation for the people doing the work."

Isakson said serving the troops was the right thing to do.

"We're an Air Force family. We're all apart from our own families, so we share this time with them," he said.

For her part, Hertog hoped to offer at least a little comfort to trainees.

"It is kind of unsettling for them, being away for the first time from home," she said.

Donning a Santa hat, camouflage pants and a white chef's coat embroidered with a blue star on the shoulder, Hertog said she enjoyed seeing the looks on the faces on the other side of the steaming trays.

"I think we get more out of it than they get out of it," she said.



(Kevin Geil/Express-News)

Airman Josh Conde of Kentucky and Airman 1st Class Tamla Wakefield of New York eat Christmas dinner at Lackland AFB.